

## Oral Histories

Number: 28

Date: 8/23/90

Condition:

Good

Holdings:

WP Library

Initials: DP

Interviewee: Wilkinson, Larry (History of Wilkinson Library)

Interviewer: Davine Pera

Abstract: Side A

00-47 Larry's birth and history of his education. He was born in Middletown, Conn. In 1922 and moved to Syracuse, N.Y. at the age of 1 or 2. He left to go to prep school in 1939 and then on to Wesleyan University. Spent the next few years in the service. Married his wife, Betty, on the boardwalk in Atlantic City in 1943. Moved to Southern California. Recites his many years in construction and various positions he held.

00-112 In 1965 the bond market for schools faltered, so he worked for high tech firms, handling materials for the aircraft industry. Jobs slowed down, so he talked to his friend, Howard Moore about moving to Telluride for one year to remodel Moores's cabin. They sold their home in LA and here to Telluride. He spent the first winter with frozen pipes and the whole process of remodeling. He decided to go into construction and became more acquainted with the locals. He bought some lots from Ray Fancher on Columbia to build on and made their home here. He ran for County Commissioner.

112-153 Betty began inquiring about libraries. At that time only a bookmobile came into town once a week. They found support within town to establish a group and start a library. They met with the Fire Department at the town hall to obtain space in Quonset hut. After their presentation to the firemen, they were toasted by passing the bottle.

153-206 The story of restoration and cleaning of the Quonset hut. A group formed a non-profit organization and the library was open two or three days a week, three or four hours a day. Asked for donations for money to pay for heat. Space was heated with a coal burning stove. Books were borrowed and donated from the community. Betty and Larry ran it as volunteers.

206-249 The need for a more established operation grew, so a petition was presented to the County Commissioners to create a legal library. One hundred fifty names were gathered for the petition to get it put on the ballot. It was placed on the November ballot in 1974 and was passed six to one. In January 1975 they started collecting money from the County Treasurers office.

249-434 Soon there was a need for larger quarters. Larry appeared before the town council for permission to use the old stone jail. Applied to the State for a Historical Grant

to renovate the jail. Story of renovating the building. Betty and Larry hauled twenty tons of rock during the summer in the back of their van, three or four rocks at a time. The grant was approved and many volunteers worked on the building. The state had guidelines they had to follow. Describes conditions in the building and how they remodeled it. Stories of problems they encountered. 1976 was the date of the formal dedication for new library at the old town jail. Describes the party held.

434-514 Interesting story about mucking out of the jail. Some of the bricks were given to John Fahnestock for his kiln. Names some of the contractors hired to work on the building.

514-585 Eventually they ran out of room and decided to build on the rear of the property. The Rock family owned some of the property.

#### Side B

08-140 Continues the story of funding for the library. The 1984 election. The bond issue was placed on the ballot and passed three to one. Selection of the architectural firm. Creation of first Library Board. The new building received two awards for design. Talks of architect's presentation to the board. Jobs were put out to bid in July of 1986 and completed in July 1987. They incorporated the old jail into the new design. At completion a full time library director was hired, as Betty was ready to retire.

140-230 Larry continued as chairman of the board and is involved in Pathfinder Regional Library System. Speaks of Pathfinders and Marmott systems, which he hopes to get on line soon. Describes different services, which the library offers such as Newspaper microfilms, and the Oral History Program. Speaks of the need for more paid staff.

230-278 Friends of the Library group organized. Describes various tasks they perform. Donations for memorial for wife, Betty. Mentions other programs for money for the library.

Description: sound cassette (65 minutes)

Subjects: Side A

Larry's personal history

Starting the library

Renovating the old stone jail

Side B

Funding for new library

Pathfinders and Marmott systems

Friends of the Library